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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000696

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADORS CONCEDE ELECTORAL CHANGES, UN PUSHING
STAFFING PLAN

REF: A. KABUL 00645

[1](#)B. KABUL 00651

Classified By: A/Amb J. Mussomeli for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. 1. (C) Summary: While the decree recently signed by President Karzai to amend the electoral law (ref. A) was roundly decried by ambassadors at the weekly UNAMA meeting in Kabul on February 22, they concurred that the international community would not at this point make public statements condemning the decree but instead work to mitigate the more objectionable clauses. IN SRSG Kai Eide's absence, the meeting was chaired by D/SRSG Robert Watkins, who called the decree "very alarming in tone." Watkins also confirmed that the plan to restructure UNAMA by creating a body of up to twenty senior advisors seconded from home country missions is moving forward and that requests are beginning to be sent to donor countries to request these advisors (see ref. B for Mission concerns about the plan). End Summary.

2010 Elections - A Bitter Pill

[1](#)2. (C) Echoing his counterparts' complaints about the decree, most of which centered around the nationalization of the Electoral Complaints Committee (ECC), A/Ambassador Mussomeli told the group that it might backfire to take too strong and too public a stance against the decree at this point and that the United States prefers not to appear heavy-handed and would prefer at this stage to engage Karzai with more finesse. Moreover, publicly fighting Karzai now, after he has already signed the electoral decree, could offer Karzai the opportunity to wave the flag of sovereignty.

[1](#)3. (C) U.K. Acting Ambassador Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles requested that a small group of key donors define red lines and create a common stance before Karzai. Opposition to the electoral decree would resonate much more if voiced by concerned Afghans, the Aga Khan Foundation representative suggested. He encouraged the international community to help organize a group of influential Afghans who could discuss their concerns with Karzai more convincingly than we could.

[1](#)4. (C) Watkins noted that, since the Afghan government has not made the electoral reforms the U.N. has requested, the U.N. is defining its red lines and could decide to curb its elections support if its red lines are crossed. The representative from Norway noted that outstanding issues of concern include: the potential that the number of parliamentary seats available to women will be limited; Karzai's failure to remove Ludin as chair of the Independent Elections Commission (IEC); and the need to prosecute officials suspected of fraud in the 2009 elections. Several

representatives noted that the international community is not likely to withhold full funding for the 2010 elections, but said that adjustments could be made in the level of support the international community and U.N. provide to the elections if desired reforms are not made.

15. (C) Voices of dissent included the representative of the European Commission, who advocated letting the Afghans run their election as they see fit as a chance for them to prove the results of their capacity-building. We shouldn't pre-judge them, he said, but rather give them the opportunity to prove they are capable of conducting democratic elections.

The Russian ambassador, who called international involvement in the 2009 elections a "total mess," also said that these elections offer an opportunity for the Afghans to develop their democracy in their own way and that we should support them in this.

16. (C) In an email on 24 February, a senior UNAMA political advisor laid out the current thinking within UNAMA on the role the UN will play in the 2010 elections. Working toward a deadline of 12 March to submit a proposal to the Security Council to renew their mandate (which is expected to be adopted on 22 March), UNAMA is dependent on two things before they can commit to supporting the 2010 elections: first, Afghanistan's permanent mission in the UN must formally request UNAMA's support, and, second, the international community must commit to funding the elections.

GIROA is expected to make the request for elections support in time for the request to be adopted in UNAMA's renewed mandate. If major donors commit to supporting the elections, the advisor said, the UN will

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support the elections, and conversely they will not support the elections if the international community withholds funding. UNDP-ELECT's participation in the elections is contingent on UNAMA's; ELECT will not support the elections if UNAMA does not.

Civilian Surge at UNAMA?

17. (C) Acknowledging that he has received feedback, largely critical, from several donor countries on the proposal to create twenty senior advisor positions within UNAMA, Watkins said that the proposal is going forward. The program will be staffed by officials seconded from their home agencies. UNAMA advisor Mark Ward explained that the program is intended to improve the international community's ability to respond to requests from GIROA for funding by providing a direct link between UNAMA and key ministers. Advisors would serve as "coaches" to ministers, as Ward does in his current capacity, and help them to structure their pitches to donor agencies for funding.

18. (C) Similarly, these senior advisers would also help ministers learn how to refuse proposed donor programs that don't fit with GIROA's objectives and to work with the donor agencies to develop programs that do meet Afghanistan's objectives. Since the advisors will come from all of the key donor agencies, Ward said, they will be able to exercise their knowledge of how their home agencies work and use it to help GIROA make requests that are structured and timed in a way that they can be supported by the donor agencies. The advisors would not affect the technical capacity advising programs that are already taking place at key ministries; their role and perspective would be different from the current advisors', he said.

19. (C) The U.S. and U.K. both expressed reservations about the proposed restructuring, and the Russian ambassador asked whether the change would require an update to UNAMA's mandate. Watkins replied that it did not. The Secretary General has approved the plan and a note verbale has been

sent to permanent missions in New York, requesting that the
advisor position be filled shortly, said Watkins.
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